BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Edward Fukunaga, 71, retired head of the agricultural experiment station in Kona

"But I never dreamed that the macadamia [nut] price is going to be this high. But as soon as I came [1947], I've been telling every farmer, every meeting that we used to have, to plant macadamia. But when the coffee prices were sky-high, everybody was happy and everybody thought I was crazy. And the coffee growers' association here tried to get me fired. You see, the Japanese farmers are real different. They think that the importance of coffee is not only in making money, but there's some kind of spiritual thing back of that. So, they said, 'The coffee is our life.'"

Edward Fukunaga was born in Koloa, Kauai on November 1, 1909. At the time of his birth, his parents worked in the pineapple fields of a Dr. Dick Waterhouse. Later, they farmed in Korea for 1-1/2 years and in Manoa for 12 years. As a young man, Edward helped on the family's banana farm in Manoa and attended McKinley High School.

After graduating from McKinley in 1930, Edward went on to the University of Hawaii where he received advanced degrees in chemistry. From 1935 to 1941, he was employed as a chemist by the Hawaii Agricultural Experiment Station in Honolulu.

In 1941, he came to Kona to work as a county extension agent. His plans, however, were changed with the coming of World War II. During the war years, he served as a Japanese-language instructor for the U.S. military.

Upon his return from the war, he became the Superintendent of the Kona agricultural experiment station, a position he held for more than 25 years.

Retired for the past eight years, Edward now has time to enjoy his vast collection of classical music. He also continues to be an active member of the Kona Hongwanji.

Tape No. 9-52-1-81

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Edward Fukunaga (EF)

January 23, 1981

Kealakekua, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Michiko Kodama (MK)

MK: Interview with Mr. Edward Fukunaga at his office in Kealakekua, Kona, Hawaii on January 23, 1981.

Mr. Fukunaga, can you first tell me when were you born?

EF: I was born on November 1, 1909.

MK: And where were you born?

EF: I was born Koloa, Kauai.

MK: How many were there in your family?

EF: I was the first born, and I have another younger brother. And these two are the only children my parents had.

MK: And you're a nisei?

EF: Yes.

MK: So, I was wondering, when did your parents originally leave Japan?

EF: Oh, my father came to Hawaii just about six years before I was born. My mother came here about a year before I was born.

MK: What part of Japan did they come from?

EF: They came from Yamaguchi-ken.

MK: Both of them?

EF: Both of them. Even from the same town and the same village.

MK: And their names were. . . .

EF: My father was Fukunaga, and my mother, Agawa.

MK: I was wondering, why did they leave Japan?

EF: Well, my father came here on his own to seek his fortune. He came here, first, on his own. Since he was the youngest--my father had family of three brothers. He was the youngest, so he came here. He first worked as a clerk in a store on Oahu, in Aiea. Then, while he was still in Japan, you know, he used to work in winters for sake brewery and, sometimes, the shōyu brewery. So, he knew how to make shōyu--and sake, too, of course. So, he went to Kauai, decided to be independent and make shōyu.

He used to tell me that his shōyu was pretty good. He could sell everything he made. But the problem was, he couldn't collect. A large portion of his sake used to be sold to the place what they call "kitchen." You know, where the kitchen? Where all the single men go there to have their meals. And these kitchens couldn't charge the single men too much money. They were always having a hard time, so they couldn't pay. Since this kitchen couldn't pay, well, my father had a hard time, too. So, he decided not to go too much in that and he quit.

Then, he started working first as a field hand for a medical doctor who grew some pineapple--commercial pineapple. His main job was handling mules. Driving the wagon and also doing the plowing with the mules. Since he had access to these wagons. . . . Now, for example, on Kauai, there was one Daijingū-san [a Shintō shrine] in a place called Lawai. Going by foot from Koloa to there is little too far. So, on New Year's--every New Year--we used to go by wagon there.

MK: Did he ever use the wagon to transport other people other than your family?

EF: No, he couldn't do that because (laughs). . . . The only thing he did was, sometime, get permission to go fishing. (Laughs) But not often. Only when he took the whole family down.

MK: Those days, what was your mother doing?

EF: My mother also worked on the pineapple farm. But she stayed home when we both were very young. But once we started to go into school, she started working.

MK: And this medical doctor's name was. . . .

EF: I don't know his first name, but I remember him as Dr. Waterhouse. I don't know how many years he worked there, but later on, we moved to the Koloa Sugar Plantation, and my father was a plantation worker. And so was my mother.

MK: What kind of plantation work did they do at Koloa?

EF: Sugar plantation.

MK: So, it was more hō hana?

EF: Yes, hō hana. And my father did, once, what they call a contract cane. Yes, he take care of the weeding and all that. The plantation took care of the planting, and the harvesting, and the main jobs like that. But the main job of the contractor is to see that the cane is watered and hoed.

MK: So, he did contract cane?

EF: Yeah. I understand that's a hard job. I was too young then to know this, but all I knew that my father had what the Japanese call "uke-kibi" (chuckles) or contract cane.

MK: I've heard that term, and they also call it "ukeoi-shi."

EF: Well, ukeoi-shi is general, but uke-kibi is just contract cane. You know, you contract to do certain job in a certain field. And then, you get paid according to the tonnage of the cane coming out of the field. Although you work harder and longer hours and all that, you usually get extra pay.

MK: More pay than you would get doing day work?

EF: Common labor, yeah.

MK: I don't know if you would have this information, but how did your father do with the uke-kibi?

EF: He did pretty good. Yes.

MK: I know that while you were in Koloa, Kauai, you attended school there. Can you tell me about your schooling?

EF: Yes, I attended school when I was six. I attended both Japanese school and public school simultaneously.

MK: You were telling me that you skipped a grade?

EF: Oh, yes. I skipped the fifth grade in the public school. Oh, not because I was a super student, but this thing happened. You see, there were two first grade, two second grade, and two third grade--and two fourth grade, that's right. But when it come to fifth, sixth, and seventh and eighth, there were only one classroom [for each grade]. Now, usually, when the kids get to about fifth grade, many of them are withdrawn [from school] to work at home, or work in the plantation, or something. So, the number of students falls down. So, usually, one class from fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth is okay. But then, in our time, we had too many students and there were not enough seats in the classroom. So, I think, three of us

was put up to sixth grade. And so, we didn't attend the fifth grade.

(Laughter)

MK: So, that's how you skipped a grade? Oh.

EF: Yes. Not because we're the good students. Of course, they picked the students with the fairly good grade, I guess. (Laughs)

MK: So, you went up to the sixth grade in Koloa, Kauai. Then, you were telling me that your family moved back to Japan in 1921?

EF: That's right. You see, it was general custom there, when the kids attain the age of ten, they work on the sugar plantation during the summer vacation. But I started working on the sugar plantation when I was nine years old. Right after the war [World War I], sugar prices were very high, and the plantation, they were looking for labor. They didn't ask you any question. But they won't hire anybody unless they are ten years old. But even if eight-year-old kids, all you have to do is tell 'em you are ten, (chuckles) and they'll hire. I was nine when I first worked. I just tell the plantation I'm ten years old, and they said, "Okay." (Chuckles) And then, no sense stay home. Because you stay home, you going to be all by yourself because all your classmates are working in the plantation. In fact, we used to have lot of fun working. It's not too hard work.

MK: What kind of work did you do as a nine-year-old worker?

EF: Kids are usually used whenever they have planting to do. Adults come and cut sugarcane pieces, about a foot or foot and a half long, by hand on the rows. We kids would grab those and put 'em at the bottom of the row. And certain places, we have to face it in such a way that the (buds) turn downward. Because if the (buds) turn up and come up, the theory is that the wind will come and break the new shoots off. So, that was our job. And then, the adults come and cover it up with the hoe, and all that. But when there are no planting to be done, we'd go weeding. There're lots of weeding. Because at that time, there are no herbicides or anything.

MK: In those days, how much pay were you getting as a child worker?

EF: I got 40 cents a day. But my predecessors, I was told that they were paid only 25 cents. I don't know how many years before me, but (laughs) 25 cents a day.

MK: How long was your work day?

EF: Oh, from 6 [o'clock a.m.] to 4 [o'clock p.m.] with 15 minutes off for breakfast and half an hour for lunch.

MK: I know you told me that it was kinda good fun working, but what else did you feel about this sugar work at that age?

EF: Oh! You know, in Japanese school, they taught us how to be hard-working and to be frugal and all that sort of thing. So, we didn't think nothing. We thought it was our duty to do it. For example, sometime, when we working near the stream near the mountains, there are 'ōhi'a[-'ai] trees--mountain apple trees--on the side. Lunchtime, we just hurry, eat our lunch in five or ten minutes, and then run down to the stream, and climb up the trees, and pick 'ōhi'a. And then, we knew all the sweet guavas. There are sour and sweet ones over there. And then, of course, we used to get stung by yellow jackets quite often, you know. (Laughs) So, we didn't think anything. It's great fun.

MK: So, when you weren't working, you had those other things to do, then?

EF: Yeah. When we don't work and when we are kids, baseball used to be the thing. Koloa used to be divided into ma uka and ma kai people, see? So, ma kai people and ma uka people, all, we used to play baseball. We used to play without umpires. And they'd be fights every now and then. But still we used to play. We used to have lots of fun. We didn't have money to buy balls. So, we used to make ball with old rags. You know, cut the rags into about one inch pieces and wind it round and round and round, and make it as hard as possible. And then, on the outside, we put a netting of string (chuckles) to keep it. . . . Of course, the ball didn't last too long. But lot of people made those, so we had lot of balls.

MK: What did you use for bats, then?

EF: Bats, sometimes we used to make our own bats. Some people used to buy 'em, but most of the time, we used to use bat made of hau log. They are light, you know. And we were small kids, so.

MK: Those days, did the different ethnic groups mix together in Koloa?

EF: Hardly any. Because practically all plantation laborers were Japanese. The Filipinos just coming in, and they didn't have too many children. I think, in all of Koloa school, they may have had half a dozen Filipino boys and girls. But I knew about only one or two.

MK: So, predominantly Japanese, then?

EF: Yes, at that time. Because I left Koloa in 1921.

MK: When you left Koloa, you went to Japan. I was wondering, why did your family go to Japan?

EF: Another thing is this, most of the Filipinos came [as] single man.

They didn't bring their wives along. Japanese been here longer, and they had picture brides and so forth. Like in my father's case, well, they didn't have picture bride, but everything was arranged at home in the village in Japan. And then, they sent my mother over. In fact, my father knew my mother before he went to Hawaii.

MK: They were, more or less, officially married in Japan. She was entered into the family register, and then she came on over?

EF: Yes, yes. That's right. Then, the reason why my folks went to Japan. . . . The main idea was, in the beginning, is to make some money and go back to Japan to start a business of his own. So, my father decided that he had enough money saved. I don't know how many thousand he had, but. So, he went back to Japan, and he bought a piece of land in Korea.

In Korea, he grew mostly pears. Grew pears and in between. . . . We lived in a river delta. Delta of the Naktong River--one island surrounded by the river. A flat piece of land, sandy land. Of course, if you dig little bit, in the summertime, water comes out. So, it's kinda swampy land. They have to dig a swath and make rice paddies out of it; and with the dirt, pile up and make the fields for the pear trees. So, we have fields and paddies, and fields and paddies, alternate. So, we grew rice and pears. We stayed there two winters and one summer.

My mother, especially, decided that at the rate they were going, they would never be able to send us two kids to college. Their earning was not enough. So, at that time, the law was such that you could stay out of America for two years and come back again on the same permit or whatever document they had. So, before the two years were up, we just came.

MK: Returned back to Hawaii?

EF: Hawaii, yeah.

MK: But before you returned back to Hawaii, what was it like living in Korea during those two years?

EF: I enjoyed it very much, and I didn't mind staying there (chuckles) forever. You see, kids, I think, wherever they go, they adapt themselves, and they make friends, and all kinds. Oh, we lived on the delta and since I used to like swimming. . . . When I was on Kauai, we used to live near an irrigation ditch. During the summertime, when we not working in the plantation, we used to swim just about all day long. When we get too cold, we go out, we put on our clothes, and warm ourself in the sun. And then, after a hour or so, we go back in the water again. (Laughs) That's another thing. So, I used to like the water.

And we used to do some fishing. We had a little bay-like place on the [Naktong] river, where the water doesn't flow. A friend of mine had a boat in there. We used to dive from the boat, go down to the bottom, and scrounge around in the bottom, and come up with clams. And there were so many fish there that the fish jump, especially the mullet. I know, in one case, the mullet just jumped in the boat, and (laughs) I just grabbed it. And then, I know, once, three families hired commercial fishermen to fish on the river. The Naktong River was very wide. One side was gentle slope with sandy beaches; one side was steep. Usually, when the river curves, this side is gentle slope, but this side is steep because the water carves, you know. And we go on the other side where it's gentle. They will put a surround net around--just like the hukilau net--and we used to catch mullets by the bags. (Laughs)

MK: There was really no want for food--at least, there was fish.

EF: Yeah. And then, we dried the mullet and (chuckles) had fish for quite a while. The fishermen was not too interested in mullet, too, because they can catch a lot of mullet. So, that means that fish was kinda cheap. And no refrigeration and all that sort of thing, so they cannot send it too far.

MK: Did they salt a lot of their fish?

EF: They probably could have done it.

MK: I was also wondering, since your family were Japanese who immigrated to Korea, were there other Japanese families like yours in that area?

EF: Yes. That's why we went there. There were Japanese communities. And then, on this island, there was a Japanese school. There were four classes. Just four teachers, and each teacher taught two classes--fifth and sixth, first and second, third and fourth. I was in fifth and sixth. You know, one teacher taught. And the teacher that taught us used to like singing. I learned more songs from this teacher than all the other teachers combined, and my love for music began there.

For example, those classical records, that's only about one-third of what I have. I bought that when I was working. I said, "Well, when I retire, I'm going to listen." About a month ago, just before New Year's, I was thinking, I got to take things easy. Cut down on my travelling and all kind. Then, I suddenly remembered that I have only about ten years, if I live that long. I won't be able to listen to all my records. Even if I listen five hours a day. So, I have a big hi-fi, much better one than this one here. Upstairs, my wife have to listen to Japanese program most of time, so I don't want to bother her. So, I brought it down here, bought a TV set--better one for her--and brought the old TV down here. (Laughs)

MK: So, now, you can listen to your music and watch . . .

EF: Yeah, and watch TV if I want to, but I don't watch TV too much nowdays. Then, I bought lot of blank tapes and recording some of the music, because putting on the record and so forth is humbug. This cassette, you just put 'em in and then . . .

MK: Push a button?

EF: Press the button, that's all. (Laughs)

MK: So, your love of music came from the time you were in Korea?

EF: Well, the love of music, that started once. And also, when I was in elementary school in Manoa, we had a music appreciation, more as an experiment, when I was in eighth grade. We were listening to all the hand-cranked Victrolas, you know. We were to listen to 20 pieces--all classical pieces. We have to memorize the composer, whether he's alive or not, and what country he's from. At the end of the year, we had a contest with several other schools. I used to represent our school and we go to the contest.

When I came back from Japan to Manoa School, I noticed the kids reading music. I couldn't read music, so the music book we used had all the explantation of how to read music. How to tell which key it is and so forth. I studied that all by myself, and pretty soon, I could read music better than anybody in my class. (Laughs)

MK: When you returned from Korea to Oahu, how was your English?

EF: My English wasn't so good. But my English wasn't too good throughout my career, even up to the University [of Hawaii] days, I guess. So, for example, at McKinley High School, I used to make all A's, except in English. (Laughs)

MK: But your not knowing English too well didn't hold you back in your other subjects?

EF: No, no, no, no, no. I could understand. Only, I would make grammatical errors every now and then.

MK: So, let's see, your parents came back from Korea in 1923, and you started living in Manoa. In the beginning, what kind of work did your father do in the Manoa area?

EF: When he first came, he had a friend in Manoa who had a big banana plantation--well, banana farm there. They needed labor, so he worked as a laborer there. He worked for him for few years. And then, he and the owner--that's also his friend that came from the same place in Japan, same village--and they, together, bought another farm, where the Chinese had. There were a group of Chinese. I think, five or six Chinese had a banana farm. They were all

single and they were all old. They decided to quit and decided to sell the land. The land was owned by Punahou School. So, my father and his boss decided to buy it. They bought it, and in a few years, my father bought out his friend and he ran it himself.

Now, the Chinese, it's very interesting. Of course, since my father worked on the next-door farm, I used to go around there once in a while. I noticed they used to eat four times a day. Because they have five or six workers, all equal, but one full-time cook. He used to go to the car line, take the streetcar to go town, do all the shopping, come back, and then do all the cooking. I know they eat five times because each time the kaukau time, he blow the conch shell. (Laughs) Then, once, I was little kid yet, I was passing by just about lunchtime. It must have been a Saturday or Sunday, something like that. They invited me to eat, and I noticed they eat really well.

Then, another thing that I noticed was this. When my father started working, he hired four or five Filipinos to help him. Now, he used to do most of the shopping for the Filipinos because my father used to go almost daily to town to deliver the bananas and whatever produce we produced on the farm. They really ate very cheaply. They used to use all the sweet potato vines, especially the tip part. And there's another taro, called Hawaiian taro, that grew wild around the streams. You could just boil the stems and eat 'em. We used to eat that, too. It's very good. I have one or two clumps over here, and I eat it once in a while. Those are the main vegetables. For meat, they buy iriko and aku head once in a while. (Laughs) Sometimes, pork and meat, but their food bill was very, very low. But their clothes! (Laughs) I found out the Chinese, daily especially, wear the same kind of white underpants and white shirt made of fertilizer bags. That's all. The Filipinos-- of course, when they work, they wear regular shirt and khaki or 'āhina pants. But when they go out, boy, they sure (chuckles) use fancy clothes.

MK: So, at that young age, you noticed the differences?

EF: Yeah. One side stress good food; one side stress good clothes.

MK: How did you think the Japanese fit in? Your own family?

EF: They're about in the middle.

(Laughter)

MK: When your father had that farm in the Manoa area, you were telling me that it was located near a waterfall?

EF: Yes, way up in the end had a waterfall, and the stream ran along side. We bought the Chinese place. The Chinese have diverted the stream from the bottom of the waterfall and ran it along the top of

the ridge. From the top of the ridge, there's a pipe, come right down to the house. So, we had running water in the house--our own water system. But we never had electricity. Never electricity. I went through high school and college, all through that, I had to burn midnight oil. No electricity.

MK: So, as late as 1935, still no electricity?

EF: No electricity. When my folks left there, 1937, we didn't have electricity yet. They have now.

MK: I believe you were telling me that you used to help your father out on the farm? What did you do?

EF: Yes. Well, one of the things that brought in quite a bit income was selling ti leaves to the market. In those days, they didn't have any plastic paper; so fish, first thing they'll do, they wrap the fish with ti leaves and then paper around it at the fishmarket. And also, at luaus, they need lots of ti leaves. So, in New Year's and Christmas, boy, we used to need ti leaves by the truckload. My job, on weekends, used to go up in the mountains and gather ti leaves from all the valleys. So, I knew all the valleys. You know, today, there's some kind of restaurant up there. You know, up Manoa Valley?

MK: Is that Paradise Park?

EF: Paradise Park, that area. I don't know the Paradise Park itself, but on the bottom, I used to go up the streams and gather ti leaves.

MK: So, in those days, it was just public access? You could go into the different areas and . . .

EF: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Maybe it was taboo, but nobody stopped us.

(Laughter)

EF: Then, my father was smart, so he planted a lot of ti leaves in the places where he couldn't farm too well. And also, the thing that brought him lot of money was bamboo. You know, in May 5, Boy's Day? That's when the bamboo is needed most.

MK: Oh, to fly the carps?

EF: Yeah, yeah. They don't do that very much now, but. . . . So, my father used to cut bamboo, send 'em down. Then, in New Year's, for decoration, you need some kind of leaf--fern leaf. You know, the fern leaf, usually, you get a small piece of fern leaf, and you cross 'em, and you tie it, and then decorate inside the house. That brought us lot of money, too. And pine. In New Year's you're supposed to decorate the outdoors with pine and bamboo together.

MK: The kadomatsu?

EF: Yeah, kadomatsu. My father planted some pine--it's not pine, it's ironwood, but (chuckles) it doesn't matter because we don't have the regular pine in Hawaii. Those brought in money, too. In other words, you have plan ahead and plant those things.

MK: So, he was supplying some of the goods that the Japanese needed for just cultural purposes?

EF: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So, that's what made it possible for him to go back to Japan and settle there.

MK: He actually went back to Japan in 1937?

EF: [Nineteen] thirty-seven, yeah. Just imagine now, '37, the years before that, from 1930 some odd, is all depression years. Everybody was having hard time. And he just made money right through. Of course, if it wasn't for the depression, he'd probably make more money. (Laughs)

MK: Besides helping your father by gathering ti leaves, did you have to . . .

EF: Oh, work on the farm. Of course, work on the farm. I didn't like it. For example, we used to grow vegetables for sale sometimes. We used to deliver banana to certain grocery stores--small grocery stores, big grocery stores. Of course, most of the bananas used to go to California, in San Francisco. We used to wrap it up in dried banana leaves and go down to the wharf twice a week and ship 'em by boat. One time, he said he decided to go bigger on vegetables. He had a pretty nice land, but grass about a foot tall--solid, you know. We had to dig that up. First we make more or less of a ditch, furrow, and we used to hoe this narrow piece of land beyond that and rake all the grass and organic matter into this hole. Dig it and bury all the grass, and keep on doing that. That's hard work. That's the time, I think, it took us about a week. It's not from morning to night, because my father had to do other work, too. Maybe two, three hours a day, sometimes; four, five hours a day, sometimes. That was such hard work, I decided I'm not going to have anything to do with farming (laughs) when I grow up. But then (laughs), I got. . . .

MK: You ended up. . . .

EF: Yeah. Of course, you can't tell (laughs) the future.

MK: So, you were really exposed to agricultural work pretty early, then?

EF: Yeah.

MK: You were telling me, in that same area of Manoa, you also saw coffee?

EF: Yeah, in the streams. I think it's there still yet today, too. Way up in the valley, beyond the houses, and up in the mountain, in the forest. Along the streams, there used to be many coffee trees growing here and there. In season, they mature, and our next-door neighbor used to process that and use it for themselves. But we never did. I didn't know how to process it, in the first place, until I came here.

MK: So, your first exposure to coffee, then, was in Manoa?

EF: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. But I just saw the trees there, that's all. I didn't know anything about 'em until I start working for the experiment station. And then, of course, I learned it much later.

My father was a good talker. He wasn't voluble or anything like that, but many things he said made sense. For example, when we were digging and burying all this organic matter. After he finished, he said, "Well, I'm going to let this place idle for a couple of months."

I said, "Why leave it idle for a couple of months? You just wasting the space after we work so hard."

(Laughter)

EF: He said, "Well, no, we cannot. If you plant anything right away"--you know, after digging up the place and burying all the organic matter--he said, "The roots of the weeds are still alive. So, we cannot grow. When you plant daikon or cabbage or whatever, they going to compete with roots of the weeds that are alive."

I said, "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. That must be true, too."

But then, way back, after I start working, after I went through all the courses on soils and all that kind, it dawned to me that my father's idea was all wrong. But he was correct [in a way], of course. You plant anything right after you burying all the organic matter, the thing won't grow. But not because of the weeds' roots are alive. Because if the weeds were alive and they absorb the nutrients, where's the nutrient going? The plants are dying.

It's not that, because when the organic matter start rotting, bacteria start increasing by leaps and bounds. The bacteria almost like plants in certain ways. Because bacteria needs food that is already made. Energy food, they need, like animals. But they also are like plants. They can use simple elementary minerals. Animal cannot. The only kind of (energy) they can use is (energy) already combined organically and form part of the organic matter. So, bacteria is halfway between plants and animals. So, when the

bacteria grow, they will absorb all the (minerals), as long as there is energy food--dead plant material. So, as long as the dead plant material is there, not completely rotted, they multiply and compete with the plants. That's the reason the plants don't grow. That's the real reason.

But he knew by experience or maybe he was told by his grandfather or his father that you cannot plant right away. So, I realize that experience is, many times, more important than knowledge. You can get all kind of wrong knowledge, like my father, but his experience is correct. (Laughs)

MK: Did you find that true among the coffee farmers when you came to Kona later on?

EF: Well, I don't know. If you try to do things logically, sometimes, you might be all wrong.

(Laughter)

MK: You mentioned that you've gone through years of, say, soil classes, all sorts of different classes. Can you sort of tell me about your education in Honolulu?

EF: I was sort of an education nut, anyway. For example, when I went University [of Hawaii], I said, "Whether I take 16 grade points or 25 grade points, I'm going to pay the same amount." Because tuition was $50 a semester or something like that. So, I took the maximum. I took lots of things. For example, things like psychology, religion, and economics, I had no time to take in regular class time because I took so many courses. So, I went to summer school to take these. I went to Teacher's College one summer session. I went to the summer session mainly because I was really curious about Buddhism. A teacher from Nippon Daigaku came to University in the summer of 1933, I think, just before I graduated. He taught a summer course on Oriental religion and art. It happened to be mostly on Buddhism. I also took psychology. I bought a book for $10 in psychology, went to one hour [class] every day for about six weeks, I think, summer session. I forgot how long the summer session is. I didn't read a page of the darn thing, but I passed with a B.

(Laughter)

MK: How was the Buddhism course?

EF: Buddhism, that one, I studied and I got an A in that. (Laughs) And economics, I studied and I got an A in that, too. (Laughs)

MK: Your major at that time was. . . .

EF: Chemistry.

MK: And when did you get your degree?

EF: I got my bachelor's degree in '34 and master's degree in '35. Those days, there were so few professors there and there were so few courses. So, when I took master's degree, there was nothing in the catalog that I could take in chemistry. So, I took physics. I took x-ray first semester, light, and electrical measurement--all engineering courses. X-ray, there were five students. Light, there was only three students. I had the best grade in both classes. Because the professor used to list the grades at the end of the semester from top to bottom and put all the grade down, too. And electrical measurement was a big class, because all the engineers had to take that. The professor there came to see me one time. Dr. Eller, I remember him. He said, "How come you're a chemistry student and you can make A, and look here, all the engineering students making C's?" (Laughs) But I used to like physics much better than. . . . So, I used to like radio and stuff like that. After I graduated, when I working, I took a night course on radio and all that sort of thing. I can talk about radio, but I cannot fix radio.

(Laughter)

MK: You know the principles?

EF: Yeah. You see, when I was attending the University, the chemistry teacher used to say, "There are two kinds of knowledge. The working knowledge and cultural knowledge." Working knowledge is the hard one. You better be able to do things with the knowledge. But cultural knowledge, you just know something about it. It's like my knowledge in Buddhism. I cannot teach Buddhism, but I know something about it. That's cultural knowledge, that's all. I can argue with some people on certain things, but not everything on Buddhism. Buddhism is too damn hard.

MK: So, it was during those years that you got your background in that?

EF: Yes. First, I went to Christian Sunday school when I was a kid at Koloa. Then, when I was chūgaku [intermediate school] in 1925, I went Buddhist Sunday school.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: And after you got your degree in 1935, you got a job as a assistant chemist at the Hawaii Agricultural Experiment Station. How did you get this job?

EF: You know, all through my years, I was really lucky about jobs. In

1935, as I said, the federal government decided to turn over the experiment station to the University. At that time, the director of the experiment station is about to retire. They're going to hire a new director. And this director was working at the PRI--pineapple research (institute). He's Dr. Magistad. PRI was on the University campus, so he had access to campus. He attended all the chemistry master's [degree] oral tests. He attended mine. There were only three or four master's [candidates]. And lo and behold, before the school term was over, he came to see me. I was working in the laboratory for somebody else on some other things. He said, "Do you want a job?"

I said, "Yeah." This was 1935, bottom of depression. I had one job offered to me and I turned it down. That is, someone asked me if I want to be a salesman--agricultural chemicals. I said, "No. I don't want to be any kind of salesman." (Laughs) "I rather go back school, get my Ph.D. if I can." But this one, I said, "What kind of job?"

"Working for experiment station."

I said, "Okay. I'll do it. I'll accept it." I never asked 'em what I'm [to be] doing, so forth.

So, he said, "Well, come July 1, see me at my office."

So, July 1, I went to his office. He said he wants somebody to do his personal experiments part-time, and part-time, work for the federal at Pensacola [Street]. My job, at that time, it was very interesting. One of the interesting things was macadamia was just beginning to come into. . . . People beginning to get interested in it, but they didn't know how to process it. So, I worked with how to cook it, what temperature to use, how high you can heat it in drying, the equilibrium point and humidity, and all that sort of thing. Very interesting. The relation between the specific gravity of the nut and the oil content. To determine the oil content of the nut, you don't have to go through all the process. You just measure the specific gravity of the nut, which is easy to do, and you can get the approximate percentage oil in the nut. His job, he was a soil chemist, so he used to work with soils and, oh, fancy things like oxidation reduction potential of soils and so forth. I really enjoyed working for him. And he really seemed to be satisfied with my work, too.

I used to like electronic stuff. Many of the instruments, we have to make ourselves. Yeah. For example, some instrument we have to make, I don't know anything about that kind instrument. You can look in the books and they tell you how to make it. But then, where to find the equipment? So, I go down to the radio shop. I had a friend in one of the radio shops. He said, "Oh, yeah, yeah." For example, condenser. You cannot use this kind of condenser, you got to use paper condenser and so forth, and stuff like that. Oh,

I really enjoyed my work then.

Also, they were working on. . . . The plantation was planting Irish potatoes. I don't think you remember this. Because during the depression, sugar price was not so good. They got to do something to make money, so they hit on the idea of sending fresh potatoes to the Mainland during the winter months when they don't have the fresh potato--in January, February, March. So, they planted this red potato and they called it--I forgot what they called it. Island. . . . Or something like that. They get some Hawaiian name--Hawaiian. . . . Something. Anyway, it's a red potato, and they grew it in the plantation. Although the plantation grew it, we used to do the fertilizer experiment for the plantation--the Ewa plantation, Waialua plantation, Kahuku plantation. I learned a lot of things from this particular . . .

MK: Were you ever doing any experimentation, other than macadamia nuts, that had something to do with the industries of Kona?

EF: No, until I came to Kona. Oh, yeah, another part, since about 1939, we had a new head of our chemistry department. He decided that we should start working on coffee, because nobody was working anything on coffee then except with fertilizers. So, we came over here, gathered some leaves--coffee leaves--and then tried to work on the minerals in the leaves. You know, many of the crops, like sugarcane or pineapple, in the old days, they planted sugarcane, planted pineapple. Well, in this field, they give so much nitrogen, so much P [phosphorus], so much K [potassium] throughout the crop. But down there, they don't do that. They analyze the leaves, and they said, "Well, this needs nitrogen." So many pounds, they need. This need P or this need K, and then you apply. So, we thought we going to work that out for coffee. I work, work, work for two or three years and never got to first base. Coffee leaves are very undependable for that. They vary too much.

Today, macadamia leaves, they have. Macadamia leaves, you take certain leaves--you can take young leaves or old leaves, you get into trouble. You got to take just certain age leaves. Then, you send it to the laboratory, analyze, the result come. Oh, you low in nitrogen, so apply nitrogen. So, you don't waste your fertilizer. You don't have to give the plants exactly the fertilizer they need, because the plant is a living plant. Even if you give unbalanced fertilizer, they will absorb what they need. Of course, they can absorb extra, other things, but it won't do much harm. Like human beings, you know, everybody don't eat the same amount of nutrients and all that, and they still come along. You don't hear no problem.

But with coffee, I never succeeded. And also, I'm happy today, because I went to Central and South America. They have multi-million dollar laboratories and they've been working on the same problem, and nobody came out with leaf analysis for coffee, yet.

MK: In those days, when the experimental station did their experiments, came out with their finding, how fast did the farmers get to benefit from what you folks found out?

EF: Like coffee fertilizer, they found out by doing it in the field. We had one main fertilizer experiment. The station had no coffee trees then. They started in 1929, before I came here. They had the farmers' field and they had also small experiments several other places. They found out that in Kona you need this, that and that, in this proportion. Before that, Captain Cook, [American] Factors, and many others--like Noguchi and all the others--had their own formula. Max Special, they have (chuckles) or Child's Best. They have fancy name and all different formula.

MK: How did they know what kind of formula to make?

EF: Oh, they just guessing (chuckles), I guess.

MK: Did they have chemists on their staffs?

EF: No, no, no, no, no. They just guessing, I guess. I don't know how they got the formula. You ask Mr. [L.C.] Child [former American Factors manager], I bet you he doesn't know.

(Laughter)

EF: Of course, he's dead now [L.C. Child is alive and resides in Holualoa], but. . . . Japanese had one called Chikkari 888. That's what the Japanese middleman used to sell. But then, when they finished with the experiment, it took 'em several years, because coffee is a big tree and it takes many years before they can get the results. Besides, they have to be really sure, too. They made out a formula 8-4-13, and from then on, everybody use.

MK: All over? No matter what . . .

EF: Yeah. From then on, the experiment station change the formula from time to time. We know that the fertilizer that you give to plants will depend on the productivity. When you have more production, you got to give more. And if you have more sunshine, you have to give more nitrogen and that sort of thing. But in Kona, we know that we have less sunshine up there and more sunshine down here. So, we have two fertilizer--your ma uka and your ma kai. (Chuckles) That's kind of burdensome, too. So, instead of doing that, we put one formula for all of Kona, but ma uka farmer use this formula only, period. The middle farmer, with little bit more sunshine, give more nitrogen. Ma kai farmer give more nitrogen. We publish that and give it to the extension service, and they give it to the farmer.

MK: So, that's how the results of the experiment station got out to the farmers?

EF: Yeah. Not only that, we got the cooperation of the fertilizer works. So, they don't have Max Special, and Child's Best, and Chikkari, and all those things. They don't keep in stock. If you want 'em, they will make for you, but you have to insist on it. And you gotta pay extra. (Chuckles) Nobody is willing to pay that extra.

MK: Now I understand what the experiment station . . .

EF: Yeah. That's what it's for. And of course, for example, the macadamia varieties, it requires lots of time, and effort, and knowledge to develop a new macadamia variety. I worked there. And then, in 1941 in February, we had a coffee--they call this a "coffee school," here. Coffee prices were so bad since 1929, right after the stock market crashed, right through from '30s to 1941. The prices were low and the coffee farmers were having real trouble. So, the University thought to help the farmers out, and they started a coffee school there.

They had speakers like Dr. Hands from the HSPA [Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association] experiment station. He was the world's authority on herbicide, what kind of chemical to use. Then, Dr. Dean, who was head of the soils and chemistry department, talks on fertilizer--explain about fertilizer and what kind fertilizer to use. And Dr. Beaumont, how to prune your trees and that sort of thing. And we have also somebody from the other state agency talk about laws regulating all kind of farming and so forth. Then, I came here as an interpreter. (Laughs)

And then, I don't know. Something happened there, and in April, two months' later, Mr. [Earl] Nishimura, who was here, asked me to come here and explain to the farmers. Because that time, very few farmers had cars. The thing [coffee school] was held at Konawaena gym, and most of the farmers could not attend. So, he said, especially on the subject on fertilizer which is the most important to the farmers, they want me to talk in Japanese--because 90 percent of the farmers were Japanese--to give talks in different places. Eight different places, four hours in the morning; four hours in the afternoon. Actually, he scheduled them two hours, two hours, but . . .

MK: What were the eight different places you went to?

EF: Oh, Keopu, Holualoa, Kamalumalu, Honalo. . . . I don't know whether I went Kainaliu or not. I've forgotten already. I know Captain Cook, Ke'ei, and Honaunau. Many of these buildings are not there anymore. Like Honaunau seinen-kai and Ke'ei seinen-kai is all gone. And Kainaliu seinen-kai is gone. Oh, yeah, Captain Cook community building is gone.

MK: So, seinen-kai actually had their own buildings?

EF: Yes, man! Sure, seinen-kais were very strong.

MK: You went there and you gave talks?

EF: Yeah. Well, the first talk, I start with Keopu. We use the Odai-san [a Buddhist temple] over there. Then, I talked for about hour and a half or two. Then, the question period came. That took long. These people were real earnest people. They ask all kinds of questions.

MK: How did they react to the kind of logic you may have given them for certain fertilizers?

EF: You have to explain. And I know I gave them some bum steer, too. But not on fertilizer. On fertilizer, I knew my business. One of the things the farmers asked me, I still remember. He's dead now, thank goodness. (Laughs) He said, in the springtime, one day they did this during the drought. He had a wooden bucket. Those days, they had lot of wooden buckets available. Lot of, like, tsukemono from Japan and stuff come in wooden bucket. And salted fish and stuff like that. So, they used to use lot of that. He said he had a wooden bucket full of water. In order to empty the water, it was so dry, so he dash it onto the coffee tree--one coffee tree. He said that coffee tree alone blossomed--flower came out. He said, "None of the others flowered. How come?"

And, of course, I was working for Libby's and I knew all about the hormone used in flowering pineapple. "In the case of pineapple," I told him, "all you need is, I think, 20 grams per acre to force the pineapple flowers to come out." To differentiate, they call it. "Maybe you had a tiny amount of some kind of organic chemical very similar to this naphthalene acetic acid they use in pineapple. You covered one single plant and that plant differentiated." That was completely wrong. It was the water that did it. Of course, hardly anybody knew it then. The farmers may have been observing that, but nobody thought about it.

In California Institute of Technology, there was a lady working for Rockefeller Institute. Rockefeller Institute asked that institute to do some work with coffee--some basic experiments, anything. So, this lady grew some coffee in the greenhouse. When buds were all out--because they simulated the drought condition in there--and then, just for the fun of it, she got some from the plants and doused 'em in water. Then, she noticed, few days later, that all those that she dunk it in water, the buds start swelling. They found out that it's the water that causes it. Anthesis. The technical term for blossoming is anthesis.

But I didn't know that. But the farmers probably were satisfied. I should have told 'em I don't know, but I thought I knew. That's the worst thing, you know--you think you knew. That's why, this chemistry teacher, he'll give you true and false test. When you

put a wrong answer in the true and false test, he subtract double. The students, one time, she complain. Says, "You shouldn't, because I didn't guess. I thought I knew," she said.

The professor said, "Wrong knowledge is worse than no knowledge at all." I believe that. Sure, when you got a wrong knowledge and you think you doing the right thing, and you come out wrong (laughs) without knowing it. Okay, I'm going off the subject.

MK: So that sort of thing did occur then--you would try to give good advice, but sometimes. . . .

EF: Yeah. And then, I don't know why, Mr. Nishimura, all of sudden, who was a county agent here, decided to become a lawyer. He want to go to law school. So, this job became vacant. Baron Goto, who was director of that extension service, asked me to come down here with a higher salary. I was making only $125 [a month] at that time. So, I come here, I'll get $175, so $50 more. So, I said, well, I'll come here, maybe work four, five years, save some money, and then go back to Honolulu. I thought, you know. Then, I came here and start going fishing almost every weekend. And then, I decided not to go back.

(Laughter)

EF: My job was county agent. War [World War II] broke out four months after I came. One of the things I did was to visit every single farm in my section. I was in charge of South Kona from the Aloha Theater, south. Mr. Kaneshiro was in charge of farms north of that. I had twice as many farmers as he had. War came out, and we had to turn our energy to home gardening.

MK: Oh, what did you do in home gardening?

EF: One of the first thing we did--the farmers complained because, first, they bought out all the seeds they could find in all the grocery stores. You know, the ten-cent package of seeds. Hardly any germinated, they said. So, we wrote to the extension service, tell 'em we get trouble getting seed. So, they got bulk seed, probably from the Mainland, I think with the help of the military air supply or something like that. They got seeds from the Mainland. We got lot of seed in bulk, and we made [individual] packages with paper. Cut 'em into pieces, staple 'em, and sold it to the farmers at cost. That's one thing we did.

Then, another thing we did was. . . . Then, of course, all of a sudden, the number of vegetable grower--commercial growers--increased. Of course, there were some areas where they were growing vegetables. I organized three vegetable--we call University extension clubs. And then, gave all my lectures in Japanese.

MK: Who were the members of these clubs?

EF: Vegetable growers.

MK: Were they nisei or . . .

EF: No, no, no. All issei. Oh, there were few niseis in there. In the Kaawaloa group, there was one nisei. Yeah, I think he's the only one. The rest all issei. Some of them are young, but they came directly from Japan. Yes, hardly any nisei growing that. . . .

MK: And in these clubs, what did they do?

EF: They grew vegetables. The main crops in Kona is tomatoes, string beans and cucumber. Because the land is so rough, it's not good for row crop. But anything that need trellicing is okay, because, here, we have very little wind. You can put up a very flimsy trellice and it'll stand up. Other places, you put a flimsy trellice and the wind will blow 'em over. Not only that. Even if the trellice stands up, [but] the plants won't climb up by itself--like string beans--you have to tie 'em up. I remember in Kohala when everybody was crazy about passion fruit. Oh, they built several different kinds of trellices--experimental, you know, the plantation did. They planted liliko'i. Oh, this liliko'i won't climb up, because the wind keep on blowing 'em off--tendrils cannot catch on. That, too. So, anything that need trellices, we grow here. That's the best. We don't grow the row crop where you can use planting machines and all that sort of things.

MK: So, these issei farmers were involved in this vegetable growing? And you organized them into clubs?

EF: So that they can get together. Once every other week, we used to have meetings. They have to learn about new chemicals, insecticides, fungicide, and fertilizer, and marketing, and all that sort of thing.

MK: Were they growing these vegetables alongside the coffee trees, too? Were they still growing coffee?

EF: No, no. They have nothing but vegetables. These former vegetables areas are all grown over with grasses--pastures. Well, originally, they cleared the pastures and made, and this came back into pastures now. But when you grow vegetables, there's lot of residual fertilizer in there, so bad weeds and shrubs keep on growing. So, sometimes, the bad shrubs take over.

MK: They were doing this vegetable growing separate from their coffee, then?

EF: Some of them were full time.

MK: Vegetables?

EF: Yeah. And some of them had both.

MK: You mentioned that you taught them marketing. Where were they marketing their goods at that time?

EF: Just about that time, the territorial law passed--marketing law. I got to explain to them. Number 1, number 2, MQ's [market quotations]. Then, also, you have to show them which is number 1, which is number 2, and which is MQ. Most of the selling was done through middlemen. Then, later on, of course, they organized themselves into co-ops. We had a vegetable co-op down here. The building is still there, but the co-op is not there anymore.

MK: Was the co-op successful during that year, 1941, when . . .

EF: No, no, no, no. There're not co-op, then. The vegetable co-op was after the war. At that time, they were just beginning.

MK: When you first came to Kona as a county extension agent, where was the office located?

EF: It's Manago Hotel.

MK: I heard that Baron Goto was stationed there for like seven years or eight years?

EF: (Chuckles) Something like that.

MK: So, when you came, it was still there?

EF: Yeah, still there. I don't know when, but, I think, during the war, it moved to Oshima Store. It's not there now. The building's not there. It burnt down. Oh, one of the things I did was make a survey. Since I visit every farm family, most of the families were home during the war. They had no place to go. Nobody had cars, anyway, and no gasoline. So, I used to ask them questions. Central Kona had a seinen-kai. That seinen-kai [once] took a survey and found out how many of the young people were out of the district. I said, "I'm going to follow up on that." So, I did a survey. How many children you got, and how many away, and so forth. My survey proved that there were more children out--a higher percentage out. Those figures were completely lost in the fire.

MK: I heard about that fire. Mrs. Oshima's family lost some items in that fire, personal documents. When you were county extension agent, what kind of help did the farmers need the most?

EF: The farmers needed most was, of course, financial help. So, when I came here in 1941, the war broke out, as I say, four months later. Just a few months later, people from the OPA [Office of Price Administration] came over, and we had discussions. First thing they do is come to my office there at Manago's and then, we talk

things over. I told 'em, "Here's the situation." Then, we get the farmers together and we talk--just like, I guess, with a union negotiation. You know, they want to raise the price of coffee. The OPA can raise it anyplace they want. So, that's the help we made. We have to prove to them that the prices were too low to make a decent living.

MK: What was the price back in 1941?

EF: About six cents a pound, parchment. It has been as low as four, four and a half cents. But first thing we did was raise it up to, I think, nine and three-quarters or something like that. And then, even that, of course, the inflation has taken place, too. After I went in to the army, they raise it to 11 or something.

MK: Back then, when the coffee farmers used to market their produce, their coffee, because they were leasing land from, say, the Hind family, they had to take their coffee to Captain Cook Mill; or because they were on AmFac land, they had to take their coffee to that mill for processing. And sometimes, they had to go to the stores and they would have debts, and it would be deducted from what they brought in. What did you think of that sort of system?

EF: No, that system, I have no gripe against that system because of this. Well, Captain Cook is the only place where their tenants had no choice. You have to send 'em [coffee] to there, regardless. But all the other places, they have to sell, for example, AmFac, or go Noguchi, or whatever, because they have to borrow money to run their farms and borrow money to buy their rice, and shōyu, and whatever they need. The only way they can pay it, because they don't have any cash, is with the coffee. In other words, selling their coffee there is one way of saying it, but, actually, they're paying their debts with their coffee. And same with Captain Cook. The Captain Cook people are allowed up to so many. If you have five acres, you allowed up to so much indebtedness [i.e., credit]. And if you have ten acres, you were allowed so much indebtedness.

MK: So, no gripes against that?

EF: Yeah.

MK: I was wondering, what do you remember most vividly about Kona at that time? What do you remember most about that time in Kona, 1941?

EF: I don't know. I never thought of anything special.

MK: I remember, once, in a conversation, you were telling me that when you first came to Kona, one of the first things you noticed were the fishing poles and . . .

EF: (Chuckles) Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah. Fishing poles and the empty

soda water bottles by the cases lying around in the house. (Laughs) That's right. And also, people used to do a lot of fishing, because coffee. . . . You know, the biggest trouble with coffee when they had the plantation days--they first started mostly with plantations, you see--and in those days, the biggest problem [was] what to do with the laborers off season. If you grow coffee, for example, one man can take care of ten acres or more during the rest of the year [off season]. But one man cannot harvest one acre, if the coffee is doing well, that is. So, the rest of the year, they have lots of time on their hands.

Fishing is good, and very good exercise, too, I guess. A lot of the old-timers used to tell me about going fishing. Bait is shrimp. Down at the north corner of Kealakekua Bay there used to be a pond there. There's a Japanese family. They used to raise shrimps--well, the shrimps grew by itself. They used to scoop the shrimp and sell it to the fishermen for bait. Because, those days, there's no such thing as frozen shrimp. Later on, everybody used frozen shrimp.

MK: And you mentioned the soda water bottles.

EF: Yeah. I lived in the plantation in Koloa, and [in] Manoa, and I go visit families every now and then, but you don't see that many (chuckles) soda water bottles as here. But the bamboo pole, yes. And then, they used to make the poles right here, see? They have good bamboo poles. There are some people who used to. . . . You know, the bamboo pole that come out of the bamboo forest is all crooked. Then, heat it up and straighten 'em up, you see?

MK: Were they in almost every household?

EF: Just about every household, yeah.

MK: Mostly Japanese?

EF: All Japanese. I don't know of any non-Japanese who raised coffee.

MK: By that time, not very many Hawaiians?

EF: Hardly any Hawaiians. Hawaiians were way down in the south, past Keokea. There were some Hawaiians. I remember visiting some families way down south where they grew. . . . They didn't grow coffee, though--taro.

MK: How about the Filipinos? Were there any?

EF: Yes, there were some Filipinos. Very few.

MK: And Chinese?

EF: Chinese, no. Not one. The Koreans, not one. There were some

Koreans who used to grow coffee. I knew one man in Honaunau, but he didn't do anything. I don't know what he was living on.

MK: So, predominantly Japanese, then?

EF: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Predominantly Japanese.

MK: You had a lot of contact with these Japanese people. How were they doing as farmers? You mentioned that the war started . . .

EF: No, they were all doing poorly. Because the coffee price was so low.

MK: When you went to see them, and if you asked them, "Why do you keep on doing coffee?," what kind of answer could they have given you?

EF: You know, they can't forget the good days they had in the 1920s. In 1919, they had a frost in Brazil. Coffee prices came up and stayed up all throughout the '20s, until '29, when the coffee prices dropped almost the same time as the stock market. And it stayed down until 1941. There's unfortunate things, you know. When the prices are so good, everybody think that the high price, that prosperity, will continue. So, they borrow money and they build houses. You have to borrow money to do that. And then, they fix their pulping house and buy machinery for that. Too many people had too many debts.

MK: So, memories of the good times sort of . . .

EF: Yeah. Then also, some people made money, went back to Japan, of course, in the '20s. Quite a few did that too, I'm told.

MK: But for others who remained, it was hard times when you came in '41?

EF: Yeah. And that's when they--some of the Japanese own land--that's when they bought the land, too. None were able to buy land in the '30s.

MK: These other Japanese who became millers. How were they doing? I've heard of Mr. Noguchi, Mr. Tanouye, Matsuoka . . .

EF: Oh, millers never lose. They always get their cut.

MK: So, even when the prices were low, they still managed?

EF: Yeah, they managed. But when the prices were high, they managed better. They began running around in Cadillacs. (Chuckles)

MK: How about those who were storekeepers? I know there used to be a string of Japanese stores all along the main road. How were they doing in '41?

EF: They weren't doing [well] at all, too. They're the ones loan the money to the farmers. They had a system exactly like they had in Japan, where you go there and everybody has a notebook hanging down in the store. Like today, I go [H.] Kimura [Store], I have a notebook. It's just like the old days. Of course, the notebook is not like the Japanese style, but American-style kind. And when I go, I pick up anything, I bring 'em to the desk. She'll take the thing out from underneath, and then she'll put down one by one. That's all. And put 'em in a package for me, and I take 'em home. But end of the month, I pay.

But in the '20s and '30s, you wait till end of year to pay with the coffee. Now, many of farmers couldn't pay. And then, also, these people owed Captain Cook and American Factors lots of money. This, you better hear from Baron Goto, because Baron Goto was here and he was also directly involved about this debt adjustment. There were millions of dollars that the stores owed. They knew they can never get paid. So, American Factors, and Captain Cook, and few others, I guess, would just cross 'em out.

MK: They just forgot about the debts?

EF: Yes, they had meetings, and meetings, and meetings. Finally, they convinced 'em that no matter what they do, they can't squeeze water out of stone, or something like that. (Laughs)

MK: Did that occur during the '30s?

EF: Yeah. I think that was done in about 1939 or just before I came. A year or two before I came.

MK: So, for some people who had those debts, they could sort of start a new page, then?

EF: Yeah, that's right. That's right.

MK: And to do that sort of thing, to get debts adjusted for a whole group of people, it seems like the Japanese community was somehow organized. So, I was wondering what you could tell me about the Japanese community.

EF: Oh, that's kumiai.

MK: The kumiai did it?

EF: No, the kumiai is organized for something else. For this debt adjustment, they organized this Coffee Growers' Association. They did all that negotiating. Japanese call it "fusai seiri." In English, commonly known as debt adjustment, that's all. "Adjustment," hell with it, just debt "cancellation." (Laughs) But "adjustment" probably sounds better.

MK: It does sound better, yeah?

(Laughter)

MK: Going back to the kumiai that you just mentioned, what were the kumiai doing in the Kona area in, say, 1941?

EF: No, the kumiai was organized long before that. This comes from Japan. Tonari-gumi, sometime they call it. Just, usually, seven, or eight, or nine of them. Not too big. Seven, eight, nine or ten. Or maybe, at most, a dozen families living in one area would form a kumiai. They get together every once in a while just to get acquainted and help each other, especially in funerals, marriages, and some other big personal celebration, or something they have in any of the families within the kumi.

For example, before the Hongwanji and the Daifukuji had the cemetery, they used to bury 'em right near the house, near as possible. So, the tonari-gumi--all the kumiai--get together, dig the hole, and bury 'em. I don't know what they did in the rocky place. Like, for example, the Hongwanji and Daifukuji happened to be in the rocky area. To dig a hole, you have to have somebody who know how to use the powder [gunpowder]. So, they usually hire a contractor to dig three or four holes. And then, [as] the people died, they bury one by one. When they come to the last one, before the last one is buried, they dig some more holes. They used to do that sort of thing.

When there's a funeral in the kumi, the kumi's job used to be--after the otera got a license to bury the people--used to come and clean the hole that the contractor had dug maybe two months or three months ahead of time. So, lot of stones would drop in. And also, another thing is, this place usually don't have any soil. To gather some soil from someplace--and there are places where you can get soil--and you get the soil, enough soil to cover a few inches or a foot above the coffin. But today, very few burials take place. Most, cremations. So, for example, I have a plot in Hongwanji cemetery. Now, just the top is concrete block. I'll have something on top of that, so that we can put the ashes in there.

MK: So, it's changed, yeah? I was wondering if the kumiai did anything in terms of agriculture?

EF: No. Business, no. And also, when they have sickness or something like that, they'll help each other. But sōshiki [funeral] involve lots of things, you know. For example, cooking for the family. Nowdays, even from the Mainland, people can fly over to attend the funeral. The kumiai people cook for the whole. . . .

MK: Group?

EF: Yeah, everybody. The relatives come. And in the old days, the

kumiai used to buy the coffin and all that. It was simple . . .

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 9-61-2-81

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Edward Fukunaga (EF)

January 27, 1981

Kealakekua, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Michiko Kodama (MK)

MK: Interview with Mr. Edward Fukunaga at his home in Kealakekua, Kona, Hawaii on January 27, 1981.

Mr. Fukunaga, you came to Kona as a county extension agent in 1941, yeah? And you stayed for one year and ten months. I want to know, what caused you to leave after that short period of time in Kona?

EF: Well, my original intention when I came here was to stay maybe few years and make enough money to move back to Honolulu. Because, I don't know, I was young then, and I presume that most young people like the city more than the country. But then, in the short time, I liked Kona, especially the fishing. So, I decided to stay here. But when the war [World War II] broke out, I volunteered for the army, and I was accepted to attend the military intelligence service language school there. After I finished my basic, I was held there as an instructor.

I finished, and I was going to come back here. Because I was here only a year and ten months, I didn't have enough money to move back to Honolulu. But when I came back to Honolulu, my wife was, at that time, living with her brother there. My whole family was there. So, while staying there, I decided to visit my old boss, who was director of the experiment station. During the war, he moved to Washington D.C., where he was head of the Department of Agriculture, Plant Industry Division. Then, while he was working there, Libby, McNeill [and] Libby hired him to run all the research work on pineapple fields in Hawaii. So, he came to Hawaii and he was here then. Then, when I went to say hello to him, he offered me much more than what I was going to get when I came back here, see? So, well, I decided to work for Libby's.

MK: When you decided to work for Libby's, what kind of job was it?

EF: My principal job was to analyze the leaves in the fields. For example, Libby had fields on Oahu, Molokai and Maui. My job was to go to these three places, stay there one week and check the fields,

analyze the leaves chemically, and find out whether the leaves need fertilizer and what kind of fertilizer. They call that "leaf logging." I had a good time. In each places, I had to build laboratories from scratch. I had assistants in all three places. In a year's time, I didn't have to do too much work because I had my assistants trained. (Laughs) But in January of 1947, the superintendent of the Kona experiment station died. So, the director of the University of Hawaii--Hawaii Agricultural Experiment Station called me one time on the telephone and asked me if I want to come to Kona, take this job, and I accepted.

MK: Why did you accept the job?

EF: Many things. I was an agricultural chemist. Then, somebody who had an uncle who was a member of the [Libby's] Board of Directors in Chicago--right out of the army, he was a lieutenant colonel or something like that--he was discharged from the army. He was sent over to our laboratory. He could hardly do anything, but he got the same salary as I had. I had to do most of the hard work, especially the mathematical [statistical] part and stuff like that. So, I was kind of hot under the collar. Of course, I didn't say anything. So, when this job in Kona opened up, I didn't ask them how much I'm going to get paid, or what my salary or what my rank going to be, and all that. I just said yes. (Laughs)

MK: So, the job that you accepted was to become superintendent of the Kona branch . . .

EF: Kona branch experiment station. I knew it was a good job because the house come with it. You have free rent. You got a free telephone and electricity. Water, of course, is rain water, but we don't have to pay for it.

MK: So, those days, people were still using water tanks?

EF: Oh, yes, everybody. Yeah, that's right. There were no water system at all.

MK: When did the water system come into this part of Kona--the ma uka area?

EF: I don't know exactly, but the first successful freshwater well was dug in 1959. They pumped, and pumped, and pumped. Since the salt didn't change too much, they said, well, they can use that water. Then, they started laying down the pipes, so the pipes must have come here five or ten years later.

MK: So, up till then, you were still using water tanks?

EF: Yeah. And all these development you see is 10 to 20 years later.

MK: In 1947, when you returned to Kona, what had changed the most since

your last time in Kona?

EF: Well, as far as farming is concerned, the farmers were doing much better than when I first came in 1941, because the OPA [Office of Price Administration] has raised up the coffee prices enough to make them earn a fair living. And another thing is, quite a bit of Filipinos have come in. They were coming in from just before the war, and during the war quite a bit came in. The Japanese were getting older and older. The younger generations, I noticed, have taken over many of the farms that the old folks have been running.

MK: You mentioned that many more Filipinos had come in. Were these Filipinos just coffee pickers or were they actually establishing farms back in 1947?

EF: No, many of the farmers, even during the war, although they were making a fair living, they not making too much money, because, as you know, during the war, people who working in town or in other jobs--construction job, for example--they were making much, much more than others. And many have actually moved out of the farming into this other business--construction business. There's a song about "U-S-E-D" and something like that. (Laughs) Fifty cents an hour. Just before that, they were getting 20 or 30 cents an hour. So, the Filipinos have come in here to take over the farms that the Japanese were abandoning. Of course, the Japanese didn't own the farms, they just lease the farms. They just took over the leasehold. Those farmers who owned the farm, of course, stayed on.

MK: You also mentioned that you noticed that the younger Japanese had taken over because the other Japanese had gotten older. Were there others who were leaving the area? And to what extent were the Japanese leaving?

EF: Oh, I don't know the percentage. I haven't made [a study of it]. But I would suggest that at least 25, 30 percent must have left during the war itself. Before that, the young people have been leaving in droves from Kona. When I came here, this area was just an area of old folks. Then, in 1949, a strange thing in the coffee industry has happened. All through the '30s and even during the war, they've had coffee surpluses in all the coffee warehouses in various parts of the world, especially in Brazil. But then, in the fall of 1949, someone all of a sudden discovered that they've been selling the coffee too fast and then they have run out of reserves. Coffee prices start coming up, and up, up, up. Coffee prices are rising so high that the coffee organizations got together, made a ruling that the coffee prices in the coffee exchanges can rise only so far. I've forgotten how many--10 points or 20 points, or something like that. You know, they limit. It was going at the maximum limit every day. Then, in 1953, Brazil had a tremendous frost. I visited Brazil, and I reached Sao Paulo the day after the frost. I saw the frost damage. It was pretty terrible there. And the coffee prices went higher, and higher, and higher.

Then, many of the younger people who have left [Kona] before that returned. And many of the veterans came back, who entered the army, registered in the army from some other places, came back here to farm in coffee. So, we have an influx of lots of young people at that time. The Veteran's Administration decided to give some financial benefit to these veterans. One of them is to teach them how to raise coffee, because they have been out of coffee for quite a while. Of course, coffee is easy. They didn't have to do anything. They could have learned it from their fathers or elder brothers (chuckles) who were here. Many of the younger people took over abandoned fields, and cleared new land, and planted new coffee. Quite a bit of increase in acreage have taken place in the early 1950s, after the Brazil frost.

I taught a course for three years, I think. Two nights a week and, I forgot, 10 weeks or something like that. Ten or 20 weeks, I kind of forgotten. The people who take the course got paid, too. Not only they got the free course, but my salary all came from the Veteran's Administration through the Department of Education. And the veterans who took the course got some kind of payment.

MK: Is that the school known as the coffee school or coffee class?

EF: No, no, no, no, no. This is separate. The coffee school, the University [of Hawaii] used to have occasionally. That is, they'd gather all the people together here and explain any new technology that they have developed.

MK: So, it's separate?

EF: Yeah.

MK: What sort of things were you teaching in your course?

EF: In my course, I taught 'em everything from planting, to fertilizing, pruning, harvesting, and taking care of the coffee so that the coffee don't spoil.

MK: Going back a little bit, when these young people have first left their homes earlier, in talking with the old people, how did the old people feel about their children leaving?

EF: Of course, no one liked it, but it was inevitable. They had no choice. They could hardly make a living here. I remember when I was still in Honolulu, didn't know anything about coffee, there was a writer--I forgot--he was thought to be a Communist. He used to write articles for the Star-Bulletin, and I used to read it once in a while. The picture he drew about the coffee farm, oh, it was desolate. About the babies crying on the floor, and the father and mother working from morning till night in the coffee orchard. People running away because they cannot pay the debts, and all sorts of things.

MK: I think that was Koji Ariyoshi's articles [written in 1938]?

EF: Koji Ariyoshi, that's the one. That's the one.

MK: Did you find that those articles corresponded with the things that you observed in Kona?

EF: Well, when I came here, it was 1941. Debt adjustment have taken place. It was much better. And the coffee prices were a little higher. It wasn't as bad. Then, also, many of the farmers was growing vegetables here, especially tomatoes, and cucumbers, and string beans. Those three. So, not too bad.

MK: Those farmers who grew tomatoes, cucumbers, and string beans, was it for selling?

EF: Commercial, yes.

MK: Was there enough of a market so that they could supplement their income enough to make their . . .

EF: Yeah, the middleman used to come and collect 'em.

MK: Where did the middleman come from?

EF: Hilo. Mostly Hilo.

MK: We've talked of some of the changes that you noticed when you came back in 1947. When you noticed all those changes, what did you think about Kona, in general?

EF: You know, when I first came, I thought, as far as coffee goes, I used to think, at that time, there was no future.

MK: Why did you think that?

EF: Because in looking around. . . . But I used to think there is a future in Kona for this reason. Now, to grow crops, many crops, the most important thing is the climatic condition. The soil is important, too, but the climatic conditions, many times, more important. Lots of time, with poor soil, you can fertilize. If the soil reaction is no good, you can lime and change the reaction, and so forth. But the climate, you cannot change. One of the bad features about the climate in the Hawaiian Islands is where the area is exposed to the tradewinds, the production of things are not so good, especially vegetables and fruit trees. The only thing you can grow well there, probably, is sugarcane and pineapple, where there's wind. Although, even here, too, the wind affects the productivity of the sugarcane and the pineapple, but not as much as, let's say, macadamias, or coffee, or vegetables. Kona, just because it doesn't have the wind, and the gentle breezes going up the hill and down the hill. . . .

And another thing that's good in Kona, we have a pretty big daily change of temperature between day and night. Okay. So, that is very important to plants, too. In the daytime, when it's warm, the plants manufacture carbohydrates. If the night temperature is also warm, sometimes they'll keep on growing and use up all the carbohydrates. Therefore, things like potatoes, where your starch and stuff is very important, plants grown in areas where the tradewind blows steady from the ocean, and the day and night temperature varies very little, the plants will have long and big vines, but hardly any potatoes. That's the reason why, during the depression, most of the potatoes were grown up in the hills, where the night temperatures are colder. When the night temperature becomes cold, the plants stop growing and store the starch.

Now, for example, we used to grow good pineapples here. Of course, we couldn't compete with other places, because the other places use machinery. As long as both places use the horse and buggy days, well, we could compete with them. But as soon as machinery came in, we had to go out. Sugarcane, we could grow good sugarcane, but since we don't have any irrigation system here, we have to depend entirely on the weather. And every now and then, we have dry weather. And sugarcane is one of the crops that require more water than anything else, you see. For example, they had sugarcane plantation in here. It used to do very well until 1917, someplace around there, when they had an exceptional drought, and the company folded up [in 1926]. Cotton, for example, we had cotton here. All the islands had cotton. This was the last place that gave up cotton, because we could grow much better than any other place. But we couldn't compete with the Mainland, where they use machinery to harvest the cotton. And that sort of thing. But we can still grow tomatoes, string beans, and things like that, where hand labor is required. We can compete with anyplace else in the Hawaiian Islands.

MK: So, you felt that Kona had a future?

EF: Yeah, but we'll have to find the future. But now, right now at the present time. . . . Well, before we come to the present time--I worked with macadamia nuts since 1935 when I first worked for the experiment station in Honolulu. Since I was working in the chemistry department, part-time, was working for my boss, and part-time, was working for the other boss, the head of the chemistry department, who used to do some work with macadamia nuts--at that time, how to process. What temperature to roast the nuts in, how to dry it, what temperature to dry, and so forth. The same temperatures are still used today. For example, roasting, we used to use 270 degrees for half an hour. That same temperature is still used, although nowdays, they use a slightly higher temperature and roast it little faster.

When I came to Kona, the macadamia trees were already growing. The grafted trees at the Kona branch experiment station were first

planted in 1938 and '39. Since I came here in 1947, they were almost ten years old.

MK: So, they were already producing nuts?

EF: Oh, yeah, yeah. We used to keep a record of the yield and so forth. At that time, the nuts were very cheap--about ten cents a pound. Even then, I used to think, the labor requirement is so much less than coffee. When the nuts fall down to the ground and if it rains, you don't have to pick it up. You can leave it there. Now, in coffee, the coffee's ripe, rain or shine, you'll have to pick it, otherwise the coffee will drop to the ground. If you drop to the ground, it's lost.

MK: How long can you leave macadamia nuts on the ground?

EF: Quite a while. The macadamia nut is protected by a shell and a husk outside of it. If the field is kept clean of weeds. . . . If it's full of weeds, you'll have to pick it up very fast because the weeds will keep the nuts moist. If the nuts is kept moist all the time, it'll mold, and the husk will rot fast, and you probably have to pick it up within three weeks or so. But if it's kept clean. . . . And then, there's no place here where it rains every day. In Kona, very seldom we have rains and rain all day. Usually, only in the late afternoon and evenings over here. So, [picking] once a month is plenty. And sometime, when you're busy or when you get late, especially in the dry season, once in six months, no problem.

MK: So, even back then, you felt that a future should be found for Kona and that it might be in macadamia nuts?

EF: Yeah. But I never dreamed that the macadamia price is going to be this high. But soon as I came, I've been telling every farmer, every meeting that we used to have, to plant macadamia. Coffee, right after I came here--I came here '47--in '53, the prices went sky-high. But then, few years later, it came down again. But when the coffee prices were sky-high, everybody was happy and everybody thought I was crazy. And the Coffee Growers' Association here tried to get me fired. You see, the Japanese farmers are real different. They are very emotional. They think that the importance of coffee is not only in making money, but there's some kind of spiritual thing back of that. So, they said, "The coffee is our life." And stuff like that.

I said, "What do you mean by coffee is your life? It won't bring you money when the coffee prices come down."

MK: What did they say when you said, "What do you mean, coffee is your life?"

EF: Of course, they won't explain it. But they said, "My folks started it, and they sweated it. They really had trouble during the bad

times. They kept on going, kept on going. And here, I'm not going to be the one that's going to destroy coffee or abandon coffee." That kind of stuff. They are emotionally attached to coffee. But I say, that's wrong.

Now, you look at the history. Even in 1919, they had frost also in Brazil. Coffee price high. That kept the prices high in the 1920s. So, the people in Kona made money. They were dreaming about that. The coffee price came down. In the 1880s, coffee sold at 40 cents a pound, dried. Labor, you could hire a Chinese one whole day for 25 cents. Hawaiians for 35 cents a day. And the coffee was 40 cents a pound. Of course, they couldn't grow coffee right away, because we had some kind of trouble with insects. Later on, they brought in parasites to control these insects, and they started again. We had those days, but after that, trouble again. Prices going up and down. I say, "Look at the history of prices. The price go up and down and up. Because coffee is so easy to grow and it's grown in so many places in the world that you have to be able to compete with them. You cannot compete with them when Brazil is paying only $30 a month [for labor], and here, you are paying three dollars an hour (laughs)--almost $30 a day."

MK: Were the Japanese farmers aware of the world prices for coffee?

EF: Oh, they were aware. They were aware, but, I guess, they don't think enough. They're too emotionally attached to some things.

MK: So, when you suggested that they grow macadamia nut trees, they didn't take to it?

EF: Well, some did. Some did, I'm glad. A friend of mine--he's dead--he was one of the earliest to start. He encouraged his friends to grow. Of course, he had trouble. It took him time for the friends to follow, too, because he has to show 'em, and macadamia, you don't show 'em overnight, you know. It takes several years before his nuts start producing. Of course, the most fortunate thing is, price kept on coming up and up, little by little. Of course, not as fast like in the last few years when the [macadamia] prices zoomed up.

MK: What are the present macadamia nut prices?

EF: Well, let's assume on the 20 percent moisture basis, it's 80 cents.

MK: Eighty cents a pound?

EF: Yeah, 80 cents a pound. Used to be 60 cents a pound. But way back, as I said, it was 10 cents, then it was 20 cents for a long time.

MK: You mentioned that man who did take your advice. Can you tell us

his name?

EF: Fujikawa. Yeah, he was the first one to grow macadamia in Ke'ei. He also expanded in coffee, too, when the coffee price was good. But then, he planted macadamia nut in between [the coffee trees]. When the coffee price climb down, well, he got the macadamia nut.

MK: I've heard macadamia nuts are also good in that provide shade for the coffee . . .

EF: No, no, no, no, no. [Coffee] provided income before the [macadamia nut] trees start producing substantial income. Because the macadamia trees won't produce substantial income until ten years or so. Although you get the first crop in six years, but that is what we call the break-even year that you don't make any money. It's just enough to pay for your fertilizer, labor, and so forth. And then, from the seventh year, you start to make little extra money.

MK: In those times, where could the macadamia nut producer sell their nuts?

EF: Oh, anybody will buy 'em. Before we started in Kona, the small farmers, people in Honolulu are already buying nuts. You see, the Hawaiian Macadamia Nut Company was organized in 1922. They planted a hundred acres in Keauhou ma uka, and above Round Top--Makiki Round Top--they call "Nut Ridge." It grew. And then, Honokaa, their first orchard was planted in 1916. But I don't know when they started the mill processing. And during the war [World War II], oh, the soldiers bought anything. See, the macadamia nut, there are two kinds--rough shell and the smooth shell. Of course, today nobody buy the rough shell, and long time, they couldn't sell the rough shell nut, but during the war, they sold everything--rough shell, smooth shell.

MK: So, there was a market for macadamia nuts way back then?

EF: Yeah. One good thing that happened was that the war happened. I saw that, too. I saw that the marketing was no problem, too. That's why I advocated everybody stop growing coffee, and at least, interplant within your coffee orchard with macadamia and convert to macadamia.

MK: I was wondering, when you first came to the Kona experimental station, who were your predecessors? Who were there before you? The ones who had done some work on macadamia nuts before?

EF: Nobody. Because at my time, the University was not advocating anybody to grow macadamia nut, yet. This is the problem. The big companies like Honokaa, they planted several hundred acres--I think 600 or 700 acres--but their idea was, more or less, reforestation. Because the cattle have destroyed the forest trees, so they planted macadamia nut instead of regular forest trees. Hawaiian Macadamia

Nut Company is the first one that planted macadamia nut with the idea of starting a factory and processing it. The Hawaii Agricultural Experiment Station started working sometime about a year before I started working here. Because they were already working with macadamia nut when I went.

MK: I was wondering, who was at the Kona experimental branch before you came?

EF: Mr. Pahau. Robert Pahau. I knew him when I was county agent in 1941, we used to work together.

MK: Is that the person who has a variety of macadamia nuts named after him?

EF: No, no. At that time, he didn't have the scientific status. He was just like a supervisor here. He supervised the place, and all the direction came from Honolulu. I came here, first, with the promise that they make me a staff member. So, I got the title of assistant agriculturalist. Then, I became associate later on, and then full agriculturalist. He was just superintendent and that's all. My title was assistant agriculturalist and superintendent. So, many of the projects, I could run myself. But the variety project was run by Honolulu, fella by the name of Dr. Beaumont.

Now, we had something like 70,000 trees planted by these big fellows, and also, lots of people were interested in macadamia nut. Some people have 10 acres here, 20 acres here, 5 acres here, and thousands of trees in the backyards. The trees are dark green and kind of handsome. But they're all seedling. Now, seedling trees are heterozygous. Some are too small; some are too big; some produce heavy [crops]; some produce light. And some, the nuts are odd shape--spindle shape, pointed at both end, hard to crack. Some are round and so forth. Some are thick shell; some are thin--too thin. Oh, anything under the sun. Then, some have low oil content, and when you cook 'em, it turns brown. Also, the yield per tree was so low that nobody really thought too much of macadamia nuts.

Well, these people, like Honokaa, who had lot of spare land, they planted, as I said, as a reforestation project. And they said, well, they take a chance. If the thing pan out, they will process the nut. But, of course, in the beginning, process the nut was not in their mind. Except this Hawaiian Macadamia Nut Company, they had idea of processing. But production was so low. When you bring a hundred pounds of nuts from the field and you crack 'em, the shell was so thick, lucky thing from a hundred pounds if you get 15 or 20 pound, you lucky. So, we working in the laboratory--me, for example--I said, "Ah, macadamia, there's no future." (Laughs)

But then, Dr. Beaumont, who was in Hawaii only about a year in 1936, he was head of the horticulture department. He said, "If we have so many trees, there may be some trees that will be commercially

feasible." So, he hired extra hands, and he examined every tree in the Hawaiian Islands [that] he can. He go under the tree and then crack the nuts first, see. If the shell is too thick, he just throw it away. That's one thing. If the shell is thin, he will get permission from the owner to get a branch, graft it, and usually bring 'em to Kona, and then planted it in Kona. The first year, they made 600 selections. Then, they watched the 600 selections grow. And then, they work with it, and out of the 600, they selected five varieties. Keaau planted five varieties. After this, the three varieties no good, so they planted the other two. Later on, we found some more, some better one. For example, Lawai Valley, isolated place, they selected the nuts several years later, and planted. Now, out of the 70,000, I think we have four or five that we can plant commercially. These nuts are so superior compared to the seedlings--average seedling--that now (chuckles), there's no question about being successful with macadamia nut. So, when you plant macadamia, be sure to plant the grafted one, at least the variety that you have tested or the University have tested.

MK: So, the University was doing this sort of experimentation with macadamia?

EF: Yeah, it took long time. They started working in 1936. In 1949, when Keaau was ready to plant, they asked the University. The University told 'em, "These five we will recommend, but we won't guarantee." They didn't guarantee.

But Keaau [orchard growers] said, "Okay, we will do it." They planted these five, but later on, they uproot the other three.

MK: So, that's how macadamia nuts work?

EF: You know, it's a good thing we have companies like the Castle & Cooke, who were willing to take a chance. A lot of people, of course, go and visit Keaau, and look at the trees, and hear about the nuts. Oh, they can tell when they see the nuts on the tree. So, now, macadamia nut is the biggest growing industry in Hawaii.

MK: Back then, in 1947, companies like Castle & Cooke had enough financial backing that they could take the risk and plant on a large scale. How about the small-time coffee farmers around here? Were they financially able to do macadamia nut plantings?

EF: No, we didn't recommend that. But, at that time, what we did was graft that and planted this thing here. And those who do the grafting, we look at the original trees. We know these are a little better than the others. We will recommend to some of the farmers. "We give you few trees. If you get a spare ground, plant these." And also, on different parts of the islands, sometimes, we'll ask the operators, "Will you want to plant five acres? We will supply all the plants." We probably put in about ten varieties. We look after the trees for them, except they do all the fertilizing

and all the weeding. We just look at the pruning and all that sort of thing. They gave us the results, what kind of yield they got and so forth. We have several of those.

MK: I was wondering, from the time, say, late 1940s up to the time you retired, what were the major developments in macadamia nut production? Any changes in cultivation, changes in processing?

EF: Yes. Now, the food processing department, especially, work on it. And the engineering. Of course, the problem is husking. You got to do with a machine. As I explained last time, the original machine was crude, using the rubber tire and so forth. [The original "machine" was a revolving rubber tire powered by an automotive engine. The shells were husked as the nut and tire surfaces moved against each other.] Now, the engineers work it in. Of course, many of the machine that engineers first put out wasn't so good after all, and they have to remake it. And cracking machine, too. They had several different cracking machines made. Now, the machines are getting simpler and simpler and better and better.

MK: Is there anything now that helps the picking of macadamia nuts off the ground?

EF: Yes and no. If the ground is smooth, we have very little problem, because we can sweep the nut off the ground. Originally, they thought they can use the vacuum sweeper. But that's impossible. Because if the land if dry, it sucks in all the dirt. Oh, I've seen clouds of dirt. . . . When the machine was first tried in Kona, they worked at the experiment station. We have pretty good soil there, you see? They came in at a dry period, and, boy, the clouds of dirt. So, that was immediately given up. (Laughs)

MK: So, in macadamia nut picking, like coffee picking, you still need the labor?

EF: Yeah. In Kona and many other places where the nut is grown in lava land, it's inevitable. But some places, like Honomalino, where the land is lava, they're using a shaking machine to shake the nuts [off the tree] and collecting the nuts in a artificial catcher. But that machine is expensive, and we do not know whether this machine will work on fully grown trees or not.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: We were just talking about macadamia nut picking, right? I've been told that when you compare coffee picking and macadamia nut picking, if you exert the same amount of time and energy, you can pick up more macadamia nuts and make more money as a macadamia nut picker

than as a coffee picker. Is that true?

EF: Exactly! That's true. I've heard from a couple of people. This is when I was still working. You know, we have here athletic clubs around. In the old days, they used to go [to farmers] and say, "Let us pick your coffee so that we can make some money for the club." One fellow has macadamia nuts and coffee both. One time he says, "Which one you want? Pick coffee or macadamia?" Hundred percent of the time, they'll pick macadamia, but nobody want to pick coffee. And sometimes, he said, "Oh, I have enough macadamia pickers. How about picking my coffee?" The club will say no, they won't. Because they know, if they keep on going, someplace they can pick macadamia nut.

MK: So, having macadamia nuts nowdays sort of affects the labor for coffee?

EF: Oh, yeah. Not only that. See, if you have 10 or 20 acres of macadamia, you don't have to hire people. If you have a husband and wife, and maybe one or two older children to work. Ten acres, two--husband and wife--is plenty. During the off harvest season, why, you have lots of time to twiddle your thumbs and go fishing again.

(Laughter)

MK: So, in that way, it's something like coffee, then? The macadamia?

EF: Yeah. Except that the macadamia harvesting [period] is little bit more spread out than coffee.

MK: How much more spread out is macadamia nut harvesting?

EF: Well, let's say, coffee, for example, in the lower elevations, three months is all you need. The harvesting period spreads out to about six months near the top [i.e., higher elevations]. If you go way on the top, you pick almost all year around--eight or nine months. But macadamia nut, when the trees get old, usually, you can pick all year around. But then, some months, there are not very much nuts on the ground, so you can skim the area fast.

MK: So, when is the period when a lot of the macadamia nuts are harvested?

EF: Usually, macadamia nuts, let's say, the peak harvest starts on the upper elevations and come down. The peak harvest is maybe August at the highest point. September, October, November, and come down to about November down here.

MK: So, it slightly overlaps the coffee period, too, yeah?

EF: Yeah, about the same time. The coffee begins, low elevation, around July and August, too, and then finish around November.

Except way up ma uka.

MK: Now I can sort of understand why there's such a problem with labor for coffee picking.

EF: Oh, mainly, these people don't like to pick coffee. There are many people who's not doing anything. Of course, in today's standards, people, maybe, don't care to work. But in the old days, even to make only one dollar a day, they thought it's to your benefit to work. But today, unless you make your time worthwhile--and the time worthwhile is $10, $15, instead of $4 or $5 like in the old days.

MK: Now that we've gotten into the topic of coffee, I was wondering, from 1947 up till 1973, what would you consider the major developments in coffee production?

EF: One of the things that people don't realize is this. When I first came here in 1941. . . . I noticed that when I was a county agent, too. But I didn't notice this too much [at the time], because that fall was kind of dry fall. People didn't have that trouble. Because people, when they dry the coffee. . . . At that time, 85 percent of the coffee was dried at home. Only 15 percent went down to Captain Cook [Coffee Mill]. They have a drying platform. You have to dry the thing on the drying platform right through for at least a week or longer, you know. And then, if you pulp every other day, even if you had three or four drying platforms, you never going to keep up. So, partially dried coffee was put down and spread out in the warehouse or even in the parlors [of their homes]. Most people had big parlors over here. I don't know whether you've seen the inside of an old coffee grower's house. I thought they had great big parlors, because zashiki, you know. Just for having parties and stuff. But to me, I think it's to dry the coffee.

Then, also, any flat ground they have, they make mushiro with bag or something like that, and then dry the coffee there. That is a humbug, because you spread it; when the rain starts coming down, you have to run back from the field, and gather the coffee, and put roofing iron over it. Even then, lots of the coffee used to get moldy. When you bag it, oh, the clouds of moldy dust. It's actually bits of mold come out like dust, and the coffee is ruined.

So, the next time I came in '47, one of the first thing I did was devise some kind of artificial dryer that people can use at home. So, I talked to the Coffee Growers' Association at that time. When I was a new man, I was still in good graces with (laughs) the association.

(Laughter)

EF: So, I got some money from them and made a dryer. This dryer was a

box with a screen underneath, you know, flat box. And under, made into a funnel. Of course, the screen could be tilted, and when you tilt the screen, it [coffee] drops down in the funnel and they can bag it. Also, this hot air goes through the funnel and up. I was lucky to get the hot air. The first thing I did was see the gas company--talk to them. Oh, yeah, the gas company had about 20 space heaters. Just before that time, somebody tried to develop real estate in the volcano. The gas company imported, I don't know, 20 or 30, or 40 or 50 of these space heaters, because they need heaters in that area. But then, the real estate didn't move [sell] so much. (Chuckles) Hardly anybody build up there. Ah, who want to build up there? It's foggy all the time and cold. So, they had these in storage. They said, "Yeah, we have about 20." They sent me one.

So, with wood, I built a tunnel from that thing, and put 'em up into the two dryers--two boxes side by side. Of course, the only handicap with this one is that you have to stir the coffee once in a while with the hand. It dried that way. We had the machine, the first one we made, to hold about ten bags of parchment, because that's about the amount they milled at one time, most farmers--average farmers. We told the farmers, and the farmers came to look. First thing, they went home, make one. The first year, 19 people made it. That's all they could make because that's (chuckles) all the heaters they could find. I don't know whether the heater was the limiting factor (chuckles). But then, Durant-Irvine came in.

Yesterday, by accident, I met Mr. Durant at Kimura Store. We went shopping over there. He said, "Aren't you Mr. Fukunaga?"

"Yeah."

And he said, "Oh, I am Durant. I'm the one that made the dryer."

(Laughter)

EF: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I kind of forgot about him. And then, farmers made dryers. But Durant-Irvine dryers were different. It's a round thing with a tube in the middle. The tube has lot of holes. Hot air goes in the middle tube and escapes into the dryer. And the dryer itself has lot of holes in it--in fact, it's a screen. The hot air goes inside and escape out, and while it's doing it, it spin round and round, so you don't have to stir [the coffee].

MK: All automated, then?

EF: Yeah, yeah. And, of course, most of the farmers built that type.

MK: Were there any other devices that were developed?

EF: Yeah. American Factors developed another one very similar to ours,

except they are flat--only one. They're made of hollow tile. Hot air goes down, and then up through there. That, you have to stir with hand. American Factors' one use oil. Ours, have to use gas because the gas company made it.

MK: Were there any other developments in the cultivation of coffee?

EF: No, cultivation hasn't changed. The biggest change that occurred in the world coffee is varieties. But unfortunately, we cannot use. Of course, the change in variety didn't take place during the height of the coffee boom. We use the coffee variety called Typica, because that's the typical coffee--Arabica coffee--that's grown practically by everybody.

But in Central America, they were beginning to use one called Bourbon. It came from the Isle of Bourbon in the Indian Ocean someplace. Although Bourbon coffee was in Central America from about 1911 or '12, somewhere around there, it took long, long time for the people to adapt it. The biggest handicap of the Bourbon is the beans are smaller. In the beginning, in the early days, coffee beans were roasted and sold to the homes unground, because if you grind 'em, the aroma disappears right away. Until the vacuum packing was developed. I remember when I was a kid, almost everybody had a coffee grinder. So, the Typica has bigger coffee [beans], and little longer, and better looking than the Bourbon, so the Bourbon wasn't planted. But pretty soon, when everybody start buying vacuum-packed coffee, and when the style of beans became unimportant, they gradually had a change to Bourbon coffee.

Then, when they started planting Bourbon, they have some mutations. They call identical mutations. Exactly same mutations occurred many, many places. And the coffee came out with different names like Caturra, Vialobos, Viasachi, and just Bourbon Mutacion--mutation, you know--and stuff like that. Usually, the name was taken from the farm or from the location. Later on, when the plant scientists looked at it, they said, "Oh, they're all identical." Since the first one discovered was in Brazil, called Caturra, all these is called Caturra today. The beans are exactly same as Bourbon because Bourbon mutation. It's easier to harvest because of that. It's mainly mechanical advantage in that respect. That is replacing Bourbon. First, the Bourbon replaced the Typica, and this [Caturra] replaced the Bourbon.

But in Hawaii, we introduced both. Bourbon and Caturra, the same time. We grew it successfully in the experiment station, because we planted in virgin land where we never had coffee before. But we gave out thousands of plants to the farmers, and they planted in their old coffee orchard where the old trees have died. It won't grow. We had what they call the replant problem. In other words, like papaya. You plant papaya in an old papaya field, and it won't grow. Same thing. A few farmers have Caturra today, because they planted Caturra in a virgin land where they had no coffee before.

So, it didn't take hold.

MK: Were there any developments in the application of fertilizers or insecticides?

EF: No. Of course, the heribicides were used before I came here. The kind of herbicides would change drastically. Because when I came, everybody's using arsenic. I tried to stop it from the very beginning. When I was a chemist at the pineapple, Libby, they were using herbicides. [So] we tried to change over, and we got it changed over. Of course, new ones came up. It's coming out all the time.

MK: I was wondering, what sort of changes there were in marketing, say, from the '40s up till the present?

EF: Well, when the coffee prices were high, the millers made a lot of money. So, the millers were still here. Like in the old system where we had ten millers--some big, some small--who bought the coffee and loaned production money to the farmers beforehand. The farmers paid [back] their loan in coffee. Then, when the coffee prices start to stabilize from the high prices and start to come down, they began to organize co-ops. We had several co-ops here. Then, the coffee industry as a whole start dying down. Then the co-ops start dying down. Today, we have only . . .

MK: Two?

EF: Two co-ops left.

MK: What were the names of the co-ops before they died down to only two of the ones remaining now?

EF: Oh, we have Kona Co-op--called the Donkey Co-op. And we have Pacific, Sunset. Oh, I don't remember. . . . Matsuoka used to run one. Yeah, there were about half a dozen.

MK: You said that now there are two co-ops--Sunset and Pacific. I've noticed that there is this new miller up in the Kainaliu area?

EF: Started an independent one again.

MK: I don't understand how that one was established when Sunset and Pacific Co-op have an agreement to give all their Kona coffee to Superior [Tea & Coffee Company]. How is this one working?

EF: I don't know. Usually, the co-op has marketing agreement with each individual farmer. On the Mainland, they have and they should have. That is, farmers agree to sell everything through the co-op. But I don't know whether they have that or not. Because this new one--I don't even know the name of it--just go to any farm. "Sell me you coffee."

"How much you give me?"

"I give you so-and-so."

"Okay, take my coffee." Take 'em home. And they pay 'em fantastic prices, so I understand.

MK: In the long run, do you think this company will survive?

EF: I haven't the slightest idea. I don't know where they're selling their coffee, or how they're selling their coffee, and so forth. To me, it doesn't look like they're going to survive, but you can't tell, you know. Somebody must have some reserve money or they're selling their. . . . Because the amount of coffee produced in Hawaii is limited, you know. If you have some gourmet outfit selling special coffee. . . . Like in Japan, you take the Blue Mountain coffee, which is considered the world's best coffee. They get fantastic prices. If you get that kind of deal, like in Japan, well, I think he can make a go. As far as I'm concerned, he may be selling the coffee to Japan. Because Japan, there are lots of overnight millionaires. That is, people who didn't have much money became rich in the last few years. (Laughs) Then, to spend $10,000 overnight in a bar is nothing to them. Another thing is, they can pay $10, $20 for a cup of coffee in certain places where all the expenses are paid by the company--expense account places.

MK: So, it may be that the new company does have a market somewhere. I was wondering about two other crops that are associated with Kona, off and on--avocados and oranges. Have there been changes in their production and marketing since . . .

EF: I don't know about the marketing at all. You know, at one time, oranges were supplied to California from here. They had big plantings below here. Some of the trees are still alive, yet. In the 1850s one of the Greenwells went to Jamaica or some of the islands over there. One of the sons were telling me that he brought back a wife and citrus seed. (Laughs) He planted them, and it was pretty successful here.

MK: How about any changes in cultivation, say, of oranges and avocados?

EF: No, I don't think they have much cultivation. Nowdays, most of the oranges are grafted oranges. The best oranges are navel oranges from the lower elevations. Ho, you go to the market and buy local oranges, sometimes they are tasteless. But I know this one family that always gives me, Christmastime, one whole box. Boy, the sweet oranges.

MK: How about the avocados? Have they been a viable agricultural product for Kona?

EF: Not so. It won't amount to much. Because I've been talking to

farmers here. "Why don't you grow avocados?"

"Ho, I no like pick avocados."

Avocados, in order to get a big crop, you got to have big trees. And you need a long pole to pick. And that is tiresome job, swinging the thing [pole] around. As long as you have macadamia here, whoever plants avocado is a damn, damn fool.

MK: It's more economical and easier to do macadamia nut farming?

EF: I've been telling that to everybody. Just, oh, about a month ago, somebody came in. He said he wants to buy some land. He's interested in fruits, see? I said, "If you going to plant for fun, yes, you plant anything you want. But if your idea is to make money, plant macadamia, period," I said. And plant the other things on the side as a home garden or something like that.

MK: How about ranching? That's another enterprise that's been associated with Kona. How has that changed in the past 40 years?

EF: Ranching, I don't think it good, too. For example, ranching, right now it's good because they own the land, and nobody can tell them what to do at the present time. Until somebody pass a law. Some states, you know, they have laws that taxes are based on the best use of the land. The best use is houses, over here. Of course, in Hawaii, that won't pass because we have the greenbelt law. Unless somebody kick the greenbelt law out the window. . . . (Laughs) But it's just wasteful. You just imagine you plant macadamia instead of cattle--the Greenwells, themselves. To me, I don't understand why the Greenwells won't go into. . . . Because they are protected by law, making so little per acre. As long as they don't change the law, they're going to raise cattle. As long as they can make enough money to ride around in Rolls-Royce or Cadillac, that's all they need. (Laughs) They own so much land and such a good land. All the best land.

What happened is, the Great Mahele. At the Great Mahele, the land was given to the people who were using the land. And, of course, only the best land was being used. All the lava land was still crown property. Bernice Bishop owned it. So, the best land was owned by the people. Then, when the people start dying off, the haoles came in and buying.

I don't know whether I told you. I tell this many, many times. One time, I went to a house with a big party. There's a Portuguese man over there. Lot of people, they criticize the haoles for coming here and steal the land from the Hawaiians by giving them liquor and so forth. This guy says, "No! They didn't steal the land. The Hawaiians came, and they begged the [haoles] to buy that. 'I need two bottle of whiskey. Go and give me this.'" He take the land. Because his father is dead, his kids are dead.

Only he's alive. A big portion of the population died from measles. In 1842, I think, the measles came in. Tuberculosis came in in 1848, somewhere around there. Then, the Chinese brought in the leprosy.

MK: The last time I spoke with you, you mentioned some of the experimentation that had been done, say, macadamia nuts, [and] coffee varieties. You also mentioned some failures. I think the one mentioned at length was tobacco experimentation.

EF: Oh, tobacco, yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, we weren't interested in tobacco at all. You know, the cigarette wrappers are grown with shade. They put cheesecloth over it, and they grow under shade. Here, somehow they found out that we used to grow tobacco wrappers without shade because we have this afternoon cloudiness. According to Mr. Jared Smith, who used to be manager of the tobacco company here. . . . I met him one time by accident. He came to the station, and we had a long talk. He said, "Yes, we used to grow good tobacco." I asked him why the tobacco company folded up. "Well," he said, "probably, we were too hardheaded. We tried to sell the tobacco ourselves because it was so good." Probably, they sold it under some brand name or something. Also, just about that time, they had fire. I don't know why. Not only one, but two or three of the drying sheds burned down.

MK: When did that occur?

EF: I don't exactly know. In the teens--1915 or '16 or '17, or somewhere around there.

MK: So, during your time as a experimental station supervisor, there was no experimentation with tobacco?

EF: No, no, no. Not that I know. But the first manager was head of the Hawaii Experiment Station--Jared Smith. They hired him to run the tobacco. He may have done some tobacco work in the experiment station before.

MK: You were superintendent of the experimental station from, say, the late '40s up till 1973. I was wondering, through all these years, what was the major problem that affected farming in Kona?

EF: The major problem was the fluctuation in the coffee prices. That was the major one.

MK: And, I was wondering, what sort of assistance or help the experimental station gave to the farmers of Kona during your years in service?

EF: Oh, we had demonstrations--demonstated planting. Also, we produced lot of printed matter. I produced lot of circulars, and bulletins, and newsletters, and stuff like that. Some of the technical stuff, of course, don't go to the farmers, but the extension agents will

get that. They hold meetings and tell the farmers.

MK: Who were the county extension agents during your time at the experimental branch?

EF: Oh, John Iwane. Yes. He was right through, my time.

MK: Were there others besides John Iwane?

EF: Well, no, he was the only one for regular agriculture. They had others for animal work. And of course, there were some ladies--home economics. I don't remember the ladies' name, and I don't remember the others' names, too, because we seldom get together with the extension people.

MK: So, the assistance that you gave to the farmers often went directly to them?

EF: Technically, we should go through the extension. And the extension sometimes organized these schools. Then, I talked or sometimes the specialists from Honolulu will come here and talk.

MK: Right now, you've had so many years here. How would you describe the health of the coffee industry now?

EF: Very, very poor. Oh, it's just hanging on. If it wasn't for the retired farmers, we won't have any coffee industry now.

MK: Why do you say that?

EF: First, have you run across any young coffee grower, full-time?

MK: Very few.

EF: Very few? I don't think there's a single one in their '20s, for example. If they grow coffee, that's coffee sideline. They probably grow more macadamia than coffee or trying to grow more macadamia than coffee. A lot of people have both, you know. Of course, we have some young tomato growers and macadamia growers, but I don't know of any young coffee grower.

MK: I know of one Filipino man who was brought over by his grandfather. He's farming up in the Captain Cook area.

EF: Oh, young man, eh?

MK: It's true, I've met very few young coffee farmers.

EF: Oh, I see. The Filipino one, I don't know anything about that.

MK: I was wondering, then, what do you think about the future of coffee? How long do you think it'll last?

EF: I don't know. You see, Kona coffee, right now is not being sold on a regular coffee channel. It's more or less going to gourmet market, especially in the name only. As long as you have people like these people buying coffee for this specialized market and the retired farmer who can raise coffee just to make side money--you know, pin money or kozukai-sen, the Japanese call--it won't disappear. As long as the greenbelt law is on the books, it's okay. But as soon as they take away that greenbelt law, I think the coffee industry is the first one to fly out the window.

MK: Earlier, you mentioned that the older Japanese farmers looked at coffee in a different way. It was like something very special.

EF: They used to, but not anymore.

MK: But not anymore?

EF: Not anymore. They know that they rather eat than starve, you know.

MK: Why do you think there was this change in attitude towards coffee?

EF: "Necessity is the father of invention."

MK: So, it's because of necessity that they had to change their attitudes?

EF: Oh, yeah. And they also find out that they cannot live like in the old days. Everybody like to have a TV set, for example. Everybody like to have a car, even if it's a jalopy, just to market. In the old days, all you have to do is walk few minutes--15 or 20 minutes--down to the store to buy all your necessities. Because there were stores all over this road, main highway. But today, you don't see 'em. You have to go to the supermarket or to Kainaliu. And without car, you can't live. (Laughs)

MK: So, the money that they need to have a certain standard of living made them change their attitude?

EF: Yeah.

MK: You lived here for so many years; you're familiar with the people, especially the Japanese people and their way of life. Besides this change in attitude, how else has their way of life changed since the 1940s?

EF: I don't know if the way of life has changed too much or not. Except using modern gadgets can be considered changing way of life, well. . . . Maybe their attitudes may have changed quite a bit.

MK: I know you're very active in the Japanese community here. You're famous as the Bon dance drummer. I'm wondering, nowdays, do the Japanese community members gather and do Japanese-style things as often as they used to?

EF: Well, I don't know. We do it as often as we used to, but not more, though.

MK: I've heard about kumis, jigyōdan, and the things that these groups used to do . . .

EF: Kumi hasn't changed. Our kumi, for example, we have meeting; we have a picnic every year--we still going to have it this year, too. We had a meeting, but also, we're going to have a picnic this year. And otera will have the Bon dance the same places. Well, one thing that has improved is the temple attendance, especially among the young. Young people, very few, but attendance has been growing. Now we have much bigger [number of] younger people attending services. The activities, like judo, are much bigger. The YBA [Young Buddhists' Association] is much bigger. We never had girl scouts [before]. We didn't have. Now, we have girl scouts at the Hongwanji. And of course, we had 4-H club from before, we still have.

MK: So, things Japanese are still going on?

EF: I know why with the Japanese, especially the young ones, activities have increased. Because in the beginning, we were the majority group--big majority, you know. We didn't feel isolated. Now, we are getting minority. Haoles are coming to be majority. So, we feel we're going to be left out unless we belong someplace. So, that's the reason why many people come to the church who never used to come. Because I belonged to the church ever since I came here. I ran the choir for several years, and I attended practically all the services, and was an officer of the church. But nowdays, it's different. Especially young peoples' organizations.

MK: For one last question, what do you think about your years in Kona, as you look back?

EF: My years in Kona, I think, I was very much successful. I'm very glad I came here. I think I was able to do a lot of good. Of course, this is only my way of thinking. (Laughs) It doesn't mean that I actually did good. I think, the most important thing as far as I'm concerned, I'm going to die, and when I die, nobody going to think anything about me. If I think I did good, I think that's the best for me. (Laughs)

MK: Why do you think it was good that you came here to Kona?

EF: Well, I came here because I could do something good. For example, in the church--this is several years ago--I was advisor to the YBA here. And the YBA, there was a squabble. "Oh, we attended the meeting, talked all in Japanese. Go to the service, and they all talk in Japanese, and hardly can understand."

I told 'em, "This is the transition period." Just about that time, we were using both English and Japanese in our regular meetings.

Of course, when I was president, we used both. But my predecessor, he couldn't speak English, so, of course, we have to use all Japanese. Now, our president cannot speak Japanese, so he speaks all English. So, just in the transition time, I was here.

In those days, when the old man here. . . . He's the biggest coffee grower here, Yamagata, you know. He died. He said this out loud in a crowd couple times, "Fukunaga-san wa Kona no takara."

MK: "Mr. Fukunaga is Kona's treasure."

EF: Yeah, that's what he said. Because I could be a link between the first and second generation. I think I did the job pretty good.

MK: I think, especially in Kona, where you had the large Japanese population of old people--the issei.

EF: Yeah, quite a bit.

MK: And the upcoming nisei. You had to have the language ability. It makes sense.

EF: When they have the monthly propagation here, the mimeograph, the bon-san writes a sermon, and I had to translate that. He moved to Aiea. He still can't find anybody to translate that sermon. I used to have trouble, too, in the beginning, because translating a sermon is not like translating ordinary fairy story or something like that, you know. (Laughs)

MK: It's technical?

EF: You have to know the subject to certain extent.

MK: In a way, you've been a link from one age when the issei were dominant to the nisei and sansei?

EF: When I first started translating that, several people, older niseis, just came up to me and they thanked me. They said, "Up to now, we couldn't understand the sensei's article, but now we can."

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

MK: You just mentioned that in terms of your church work, you were sort of like a link between the issei and nisei. Would you say that you fulfilled the same role in agriculture in Kona?

EF: Yes, in some ways. Let me tell you a story. In 1918, when United States was at war, the shipping was so bad that they couldn't sell the coffee. The farmers used to complain to the Department of Agriculture, to the experiment station. They said, "Oh, before the war, we could buy a bag of rice by selling so many bags of coffee. Today we have to sell much, much more to buy the bag of rice. Can

you help us?" So, the USDA [United States Department of Agriculture] sent an expert here. The expert, he probably heard about coffee grown under shade in Central America. Then, he came over here and he looked around our coffee. He noticed our coffee growing without shade. He wrote a report. In the report, he said we should try growing coffee with shade, like anybody else, and then produce about (chuckles) one-fifth the coffee we've been producing. But luckily, none of the farmers could read the report.

(Laughter)

EF: This came out in one of the reports that I read, but you talk to the old farmers. Nobody ever heard of the report because. . . .

MK: It's in English, huh?

EF: Yeah. So, when the war [World War II] broke out, somebody got to teach the farmers. Because up to that time, most of them was pure coffee growers. And just several months before the war broke out, when the coffee [price] was so bad and they started growing vegetables and so forth, they have no experience. So, I got to give them the information as fast as possible. You can't tell them in English.

END OF INTERVIEW

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF KONA

Volume I

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